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ABSTRACT

Using Chester Barnard's acceptance theory of authority, this study of 125 secondary teachers and coaches explored relationships involving their "zones of indifference" or extent of response to orders by authority. Specific questions addressed were: (1) whether significant relationships existed between zones of indifference to administrative policies and levels of authoritarianism of coaches when compared to teachers; (2) whether such relationships were significant when subjects were grouped by professional assignment; and (3) whether significant differences existed in zones of indifference as perceived by subjects when classified by high, medium, or low level of authoritarianism. The measure of authoritarianism used was the "California F-Scale," and a zones of indifference instrument asked respondents to submit typical administrative directives in four categories of acceptability, ranging from compliance without question to refusal of compliance. Responses were grouped as teacher-determined or administrator-determined and subjected to a principal component analysis. The results of the Pearson Product-Moment coefficient of correlation indicated no significant relationships between zones of indifference and levels of authoritarianism with subjects grouped as teachers or coaches, although when subjects were grouped by assignment some significant relationships were found. Multivariant analysis of variance comparing levels of authoritarianism to zones of indifference shows some significant differences. (MJL)

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RELATIONSHIPS OF ZONES OF INDIFFERENCE TO DIRECTIVES AND LEVELS OF AUTHORITARIANISM OF COACHES AND TEACHERS IN SELECTED SCHOOLS IN MISSISSIPPI

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Introduction

The primary resource of an educational organization is its personnel. Methods of teacher selection have been refined to some extent by administrators employing careful selection techniques. Some principals do not wish to employ teachers possessing a high degree of authoritarianism due to harmful effects on the atmosphere of the impersonal bureaucratic structure. An atmosphere of friendliness is preferred by most organization members as opposed to a high degree of impersonality. Research conducted by William Garrison (4) for the United States Office of Education helped to solve the problem of whether teachers change in their level of authoritarianism after they are employed. It was found that there is a change toward a higher degree of authoritarianism as the first year teacher completes the year's work.

This change in authoritarianism could be due to the socialization process as people tend to acquire the values, attitudes, and interests of the organization of which they are a part. Teachers are susceptible to socialization in varying individual degrees depending on other aspects of their personality. Perception is important as teachers may perceive the organization as being more authoritarian than it is. Control and discipline problems may cause the beginning teacher to perceive a higher level of authoritarianism than actually exists in the school. Garrison's research for the United States Office of Education also revealed that beginning teachers perceive a higher level of authoritarianism of other faculty members and principals than actually exists. (4)

Teachers with a high degree of authoritarianism tend to be less critical of their administrators while low authoritarian teachers seem to be more

critical of school administrators. This observation indicates that the more authoritarianism the individual exhibits, the more submissive he is likely to be regarding authority. (4)

Adorno (1) stated that high scorers on the authoritarian scale may also exhibit a hatred of all authority. This could be due to their rebelliousness, toughness and coldness, and impersonality and asocial behavior. He also points out that this type of behavior is irrational and could be due to hostility towards anyone and any object.

McGee (7) found that a teacher's classroom behavior on an authoritarian-equalitarian dimension can be predicted from scores on the California F-Scale. He concluded that what a person says on an anonymous questionnaire and what he does in the classroom are essentially the same.

Authority relationships in modern societal organizations are still practiced from the traditional viewpoint. Society delegates to the controlling institution the power to structure the needed institutions that exist to provide the services perceived as being needed by society. Through this structure authority positions are created in the organizations.

The public school system as a societal institution is strongly structured with authority positions. School boards, superintendents, and principals have all been well established as positions of authority from which communications in the form of directives are issued.

Compliance with these directives is supported due to the legitimacy of position; however, the legitimization of authority does not guarantee the degree of compliance expected by administrators of the organization.

Contrary and in contrast to traditional concepts of authority, Chester Barnard described an acceptance theory of authority that results in diverse

compliance behavior. As defined by Barnard, (2) authority

> "...is the character of a communication (order) in a formal organization by virtue of which it is accepted by a contributor to or 'member' of the organization as governing the action he contributes; that is, as governing or determining what he does or is not to do so far as the organization is concerned... Therefore, under this definition the decision as to whether an order has authority or not lies with the person to whom it is addressed, and does not reside in 'persons' of authority' or those who issue these orders." (2)

In the explanation of and to facilitate the acceptance theory of authority, Barnard (2) introduced the concept "zones of indifference," which describes the extent to which people will respond to orders or directives issued by authority figures. This concept suggests that some orders are clearly unacceptable, while some would be somewhat neutral, and others would be unquestionably acceptable. With regard to this concept it is further suggested that this "zone of indifference" will be wider or narrower with different individuals within the organization. This concept suggests that the difference in the zone size is created by the degree to which the inducements exceed the consequences which determines the individual's adhesion to the organization.

Other researchers have investigated the concept of the "zone of indifference," but from a position frame of reference. Fielder, (3) Simon, (9) and Kunz (5) utilized this concept in writing and research but in doing so used the term "zone of acceptance" to avoid a negative connotation.

These earlier writings occurred during periods before administrator-teacher relationships have grown more to an adversary situation. It is apparent that present relationships could indicate a negative environment. Additionally, it appears that the present would be an appropriate time to use the concept "zones of indifference" with the negative connotation as

a means of measuring teacher responses to administrator directives.

Problem

The problem in this study was to determine if there were significant relationships of zones of indifference to administrative policies and levels of authoritarianism of classroom teachers and coaches in selected secondary schools in Mississippi. The following questions were answered: (1) Were there significant relationships between the zones of indifference to administrative policies and levels of authoritarianism of coaches when compared to classroom teachers? (2) When coaches and classroom teachers were grouped according to their areas of specialty, were there significant relationships between the zones of indifference to administrative policies and levels of authoritarianism? (3) Were there significant differences in zones of indifference to administrative policies as perceived by teachers and coaches when classified as high, medium, and low authoritarian?

Sample

Twenty-six area schools were selected to participate in the study. From each school the following six positions were selected: (1) Head football coach, (2) Head basketball coach, (3) Science teacher, (4) Math teacher, (5) English teacher, (6) Social studies teacher. Where there were more in the categories above, the principal was asked to randomly select the individual to participate. Results were obtained from twenty-four schools.

Instrument

The instruments used were a zones of indifference instrument developed by the Department of Educational Leadership at Mississippi State University

and the California "F" Scale which are described as follows:

The California F-Scale, an ethnocentric questionnaire devised by Adorno (1) in 1950 for measuring authoritarian personality potential, consists of 29 items that measure attitudes concerning the following nine categories: conventionalism, authoritarian aggression, authoritarian submissiveness, anti-intraception, superstition and stereotype, power and "toughness," destructiveness and cynicism, projectivity, and sex.

To determine the scale's reliability, the instrument was administered by Adorno, et al, to 14 groups of middle adults (N = 1518). The average of the obtained reliability coefficients was .90 for the F-Scale. One measure of validity was obtained by Adorno, et al, through interviews of a variety of high and low scorers on the instrument. The defining criterion of selection, high vs. low showed a percentage agreement of between .75 and .80 with both the intuitive ratings and the overall standing on the interviews.

The zones of indifference instrument was developed by Wilkes and Blackbourn. (10) Their procedure is described briefly as follows:

One hundred twenty-five teachers were requested to submit two typical directives issued by their supervising administrator that would fit into the following categories:

1. Those you comply with without question;
2. Those you comply with but mentally question the authority of the principal to issue;
3. Those directives issued by the principal that you mentally question the authority of, but alter the application more in keeping with what you think should be done; and
4. Those directives issued by the principal that you question mentally and refuse compliance with unless forced to do so.

Upon receipt of the suggested items by categories, duplicate and similar items were combined and refined.

From the process the total of all suggested items were reduced to one hundred thirty-four useable items. The items were placed in the suggested categories and consecutively numbered. Items perceived to be teacher determined are grouped into Factor 1, and those items perceived as being administrator determined are grouped into Factor 2.

Subjects' responses on the 134 items of the instrument were subjected to a principal component analysis. All items retained loaded at least .40

The Alpha coefficient measuring internal reliability of the total instrument was .95.

Collection of Data

The researcher visited the selected schools to secure permission to conduct the study. The principal, or coach in some instances, was asked to administer the instruments and collect and return upon completion.

Treatment of Data

The statistics used were Pearson Product-Moment coefficient of correlation for hypotheses 1 and 2. Multivariant analysis of variance was used to compare the upper and lower levels of authoritarianism to the zones of indifference data in hypothesis 3.

Results

Results of the study showed that when the subjects were grouped as teachers or coaches no significant relationships were found between the zones of indifference to administrative policies and levels of authoritarianism. The null hypothesis for Question (1) was accepted.

Table I

Correlation of Authoritarian Traits in Coaches and Teachers With Their Perceptives of Administrative Practices

	Correlation
Factor 1: Teacher Determined Practices	-.03
Factor 2: Administrative Determined Practices	.01
TOTAL	-.02

When the coaches were considered as separate groups as shown in Table II some significant relationships were found. A positive correlation means that the higher the level of authoritarianism the more narrow the zone of indifference or the less one agrees with the administrative policies. A negative correlation means that the higher the level of authoritarianism the wider the zone of indifference or the more one agrees with the administrative policies. The results for Question (2) are shown in Table II.

Table II

Correlations of Authoritarian Traits in Basketball Coaches, Football Coaches, and Teachers With Their Perceptions of Administrative Practices

Groups	Factor 1 Teacher Determined	Factor 2 Administrator Determined	Total
Football Coaches	.61*	-.28**	.52*
Basketball Coaches	.10	.11	.11
English Teachers	-.02	.28**	.14
Math Teachers	-.28**	-.16	-.23
Social Studies Teachers	.01	.15	.08
Science Teachers	-.12	-.15	-.14

* Significant at .01

** Significant at .10

The correlation for Football Coaches on Factor 1 and the total instrument were significant at the .01 level. This indicated for this group of coaches the higher the level of authoritarianism the more narrow the zone of indifference or the less they agree with the administrative policies. Factor 2 for this group yielded a negative correlation which approaches significance for which the opposite would be true.

Math teachers had a negative correlation on Factor 1 and English teachers had a positive correlation on Factor 2 that approached significance.

The hypothesis for Question (3) which was stated as follows could not be rejected: Were there significant differences on zones of indifference when the teachers and coaches were divided into high, medium, and low groups as to their level of authoritarianism? Table III shows some differences that approached significance. The high and low groups are much alike but differ from the medium group on Factor 1 which is the Teacher Determined Practices. On Factor 2 all groups were very similar.

Table III

Differences in Zones of Indifference for High, Medium, and Low Authoritarian Educators

Criteria	High		Medium		Low				
	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	F	P
Factor 1	85.41	14.64	73.57	33.93	83.30	19.08	2,137	2.43	.09
Factor 2	65.34	13.69	66.03	12.95	65.50	15.05	2,137	.56	.57
Composite							4,272	2.11	.08

Summary and Conclusions

The problem in this study was to determine if there were significant relationships of zones of indifference to administrative policies and levels of authoritarianism of classroom teachers and coaches in selected secondary schools in Mississippi. The following questions were answered: (1) Were there significant relationships between the zones of indifference to administrative policies and levels of authoritarianism of coaches when compared to classroom teachers? (2) When coaches and classroom teachers were grouped according to their areas of specialty, were there significant relationships between the zones of indifference to administrative policies and levels of authoritarianism? (3) Were there significant differences in zones of indifference to administrative policies as perceived by teachers and coaches when classified as high, medium and low authoritarian?

Twenty-six area schools were selected to participate in the study. From each school the following six positions were selected: (1) Head football coach, (2) Head basketball coach, (3) Science teacher, (4) Math teacher, (5) English teacher, (6) Social studies teacher. Where there were more in the categories above, the principal was asked to randomly select the individual to participate. Results were obtained from twenty-four schools.

The statistics used were Pearson Product-Moment coefficient of correlation for hypotheses 1 and 2. Multivariant analysis of variance was used to compare the upper and lower levels of authoritarianism to the zones of indifference data in hypothesis 3.

Results of the study show that when the subjects were grouped as teachers or coaches no significant relationships were found. When the subjects were grouped according to their assignments, significant relationships were found, with football coaches having a negative correlation between authoritarianism and the zone of indifference. Data for hypothesis 3 shows there were differences in the high and low levels when compared to the medium level of authoritarianism on the zones of indifference, but was not significant at the .05 level. The high and low levels were very similar.

The study indicates that there are some groups who view administrative practices in a different manner and care should be taken to alleviate discrepancies which might occur in interpreting policies made by the administration to these groups.

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